

# **CHAPTER – I**

## **Background to Indian Literature on Depressed Classes**

- [A] Caste System in India : Origin And  
Development**
- [B] Work of Social Reformers for Untouchables**
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# **Chapter I**

## **Background to Indian Literature on**

### **Depressed Classes**

This chapter takes a brief survey of the background of the origin and development of caste system in India with special reference to untouchability. In addition, this chapter attempts to take a brief review of literature on untouchables or dalits by non-dalit writers in India. An attempt has also been made to acknowledge the work of social reformers for the upliftment of the untouchables and the Indian governments' efforts in the direction of the eradication of untouchability during the Post Independence period.

#### **[A] The Caste System : Origin and Development**

The caste system in India is a gift of 'Manusmriti'. Malley gives the origin of the word 'caste'. "The word caste is derived from the Portuguese word 'casta' meaning breed used by Portuguese settlers in India to describe the different sections of Hindu community."<sup>1</sup>

In the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 'caste' is defined as "any of the four main divisions of Hindu society originally those made according to functions in society."<sup>2</sup>

Some significant definitions of 'caste' are cited below. While defining 'caste', H.H. Ristley says, "A caste may be defined as a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, claiming common descent from a mythical ancestor human or divine professing to follow the same hereditary calling and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community."<sup>3</sup>

Dr. S. V. Ketkar defines caste as a "social group having two characteristics – 1) membership is continued to those who are born of members and include all persons so born, 2) the members are forbidden inexorable social law to marry outside the group."<sup>4</sup> Dr. Ketkar stresses the definite relations as a whole.

Caste system has a long history of its origin and now it is deeply rooted in the Indian Hindu society.

The caste system in Hindus is an age-old phenomenon, which was based on individual's work and not on his birth. A son of a **Brahmin** could be a **Vaishya** if he started business or a **Shudra** if he did low kind of menial work. The caste system in those days was flexible. But gradually in the course of time, it lost its flexibility and became rigid. The caste of a person depended on the birth and not on the work. The so-called upper caste Hindus i.e. **savarnas** were considered responsible for the same. They treated the low caste people always in inhuman ways. This continued for a considerably longer period and it

gradually became a social tradition. As a result of this, the low caste people were isolated from the rest of the society. They lived in a separate colony outside the village or town. Sweeping and scavenging became their traditional work. They were deprived of education. They were not admitted in the schools, which were meant only for the upper caste Hindus. They were not allowed to touch physically the upper castes Hindus. If they touched so it was called pollution, which defiled the religion of higher castes and they had to take bath to purify themselves.

About 2500 B.C., there were four classes in the Hindu society. The Indus Valley Civilization was at the peak of development. Around 2350 B.C. the Dravidians developed the Indus Valley Civilization. Then came the Aryans. There were struggles between the Dravidians and the Aryans for superiority. These struggles between the two and sometimes between the Aryans themselves gradually led the Indus Valley Civilization to its decay.

In the struggles, the Aryans were triumphant over Dravidians. The Aryans brought with hard work prosperity in the social, political, economic, religious and cultural walks of life during the Vedic period or The 'Vedkal'. The period the Aryans is known as The 'Vedic period'.

Then the society was divided into groups or classes on the basis of 'गुणकर्म' (Gunakarm) i.e. merits and social duty. This division led the society to the emergence of the four classes i.e.

'Chaturvarnas'. Aryans were the creators of the Chaturvarna system in the Hindu society during the Vedkal.

During the Mughal period in India, the Indian society was divided into two categories viz. Hindu society and Muslim society. The division of Hindu society is explained in terms of 'Varnas'. Of the four varnas, the varna Brahmin remained on the top followed by the Kshatriya and the Vaishya. The Shudras were at the bottom of this social hierarchy.

Created from the mouth of the Brahmapurush, Brahmin's duty was to acquire and spread knowledge and intellect in the society. He was considered as the protector of the human culture and moral teacher of the society. Kshatriya's main duty was to protect the society and to fight for the kings. 'Virtue', 'power', 'valour' and 'courage' were considered four important qualities of Kshatriya. The Vaishya was supposed to be the caretaker of the society and farming and trading were his assigned professions.

The shudra was created from the legs of the Brahmapurush and in the hierarchy of the 'Chaturvarna' the Shudra was the last and the lowest. A shudra was supposed to do low type of menial work for the society. His duty was to serve the other three varnas. The other three varnas imposed social taboos on the shudras and ultimately the shudras were deprived of their social development. In the course of time, shudras' social condition became worse than beasts.

The shudras, considered the storehouse of all worldly vices, were made to survive on mere leavings of the other three varnas. They wore worn-out clothes given by the other varnas. Their condition in the society was miserable and they became slaves of the other three upper varnas.

However, there are varied opinions regarding the creation of Shudras. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar's opinion is worth to consider here. According to Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, shudras belonged to one of the tribes of the Aryans as they had no separate class of theirs. Their tribe was a part of Kshatriya. There were always struggles between the Brahmins and the shudra kings. Brahmins were always defeated and were given inhuman and insulting treatment by the triumphant. This resulted in conspiracy between the two. The Brahmins denied to do 'Upnayan' (the thread ceremony) of the shudras out of conspiracy, contempt and jealousy for them. Consequently, shudras were deprived of their social status. Their cultural fall and economic backwardness followed. A separate class of theirs was created for them out of their low social position and poor economic condition. According to Dr. Ambedkar, shudras did not belong to the slave community.

Deprived of their social status, the shudras started various kinds of works such as dancing, singing, brick work, iron work, pot making, rope making etc. to survive. As they performed low kinds of menial works, they were considered the incarnation of

vice and were compelled to live 'गांवकुसाबाहेर' (Gavkusabaheer) i.e. on the outskirts of the villages or towns. In other words, the shudras were ex-communicated from the mainstream of the social life. They were referred to as 'untouchables' or 'bahishkrut' or 'dalits' and so on. In this way certain inhuman taboos were imposed on them by others. They were :-

- 1) not allowed to enter Hindu temples.
- 2) no allowed to mount the platform surrounding the public wells and to draw water.
- 3) no allowed to live with other people in villages.
- 4) not allowed to change their traditional profession assigned to them.
- 5) not allowed to communicate with other upper castes.
- 6) not allowed to deny serving the upper castes etc.

If they denied sweeping roads and cleaning latrines they were severely beaten and were compelled to eat only the remainings of the upper castes.

In the course of time, class or varna was converted into a caste. Every caste was assigned a definite kind of work or profession. A caste came to be recognized by the assigned traditional profession to a particular class or community group. In the course of time, sub castes were created and the members of a certain caste were supposed to observe the guidelines laid down by the society. viz. 1) a caste of a person is recognized by

birth and not by profession, 2) members of one caste can not marry outside their own caste, 3) every caste is compelled to do a particular work assigned to it, 4) all other castes should give respect to the Brahmins etc.

The shudras did low kind of menial work such as latrine cleaning, road sweeping and carrying dead animals etc. As they did so, they lived in very poor life conditions. The upper caste Hindus commonly known as sawarnas hesitated to touch them and thus shudras became untouchables. Sawarnas felt nausea about shudras' work. That is why, sawarnas did not touch them and disallowed their physical contact. Their touch to the sawarnas was treated as a 'pollution'.

The Gods of untouchables were exclusively theirs only. They were named after animals. For example, 'Mhasoba' is the name of untouchables' God in Maharashtra.<sup>5</sup>

## **[B] Work of the Social Reformers for Untouchables**

Such was the deplorable condition and plight of the untouchables in India since the long past till the end of the nineteenth century. However, the encounter of the Western Culture and the Indians, introduction of English education in India created proper awareness of the plight of the untouchables in social thinkers, national leaders and in some leading princely states like Kolhapur.



Mahatma Jotiba Phule, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, Maharshi Vitthal Ramji Shinde, Rajarshi Chhartrapati Shahu Maharaj, and Mahatma Gandhi's work for the untouchables is worth of mention. The Brahmo Sumaj, the Arya Samaj the Bharat Brahmo Samaj, Ramkrishna Mission and the Theosophical Society also worked for the religious and moral development of the Hindu society and for the depressed classes. Swami Dayanand, the founder of Arya Samaj actually re-converted many untouchables to Hindusm who accepted Christian faith.<sup>6</sup>

### **Mahatma Phule :**

Untouchability was an obstacle in the way of gaining freedom in the colonial period and a hindrance in the way of national development in the Post-Independence period. Moreover, it was inhuman to treat a human being as a beast of burden. A need was felt for the removal of untouchability from the Indian society. Efforts in the same direction were started in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Mahatma Jotirao (Jotiba) Phule, popularly known as Mahatma Phule, a staunch reformer put the first step in the direction. By opening his private well in Pune to the untouchables, he started a new era in the social history of India.

The British government opened schools and colleges in India for the spread of education. But the education remained a

privilege in the hands of the upper castes. Women and untouchable were devised the right of education.

As a result the gap between the upper castes and the lower castes widened. Mahatma Phule went to the root cause of problem and started his work for the women and untouchables to bridge the gap. In 1852, he started a school in Vetar Peth, Pune for untouchables. In 1853, he started an institution to which some generous Europeans also extended their hand of co-operation. He started three schools in Pune for untouchables in 1858 and wrote an epoch making book on their life ' गुलामगिरी' (Gulamgiri) to create awareness for education in the untouchables. In very apt words he described the importance of education,

“विद्येविना मती गेली, मती विना गती गेली ।

गती विना बित्त गेले, बित्ताविना शुद्र खचले , ।

इतके अनर्थ एका अविद्येने केले ॥ ”<sup>7</sup>

(Lack of learning caused damage to the intellect of untouchables. This stopped their development and progress. This resulted in their loss of opportunities to earn money. Lack of money made them poor. All this happened due to lack of education.)

In 1873, Mahatma Phule established 'Satyashodhak Samaj' through which he propagated his thoughts against the slavery of

untouchables and discarded the role of Brahmin as a mediator between the God and the man.

After Mahatma Phule, no conscious efforts were made for the upliftment of untouchables and removal of untouchability till the end of the nineteenth century.

### **Dr. B. R. Ambedkar :**

Bhimrao Ravji Ambedkar was popularly known as Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. His work for the untouchables is on two levels. On one hand, he protested against the caste-system actively and on the other hand, being the President of the Constitution Committee of India, he tried to end untouchability on legal grounds in the Indian Constitution.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar himself was an untouchable and had heart rendering experiences of the caste discrimination. Though he was highly educated, he was treated as an untouchable only everywhere. On 31st Jan. 1920, he started a periodical namely 'Mooknayak' to create awareness among the untouchables and established 'Bahishkrut Hitkarini Sabha' in 1924 with its slogan 'शिक्षा, चेतना व संघटित करा' (Educate, Kindle and Organize) In 1927, he established through 'Satyagraha' the untouchables' right to draw water from the 'Chavdar Tale', a lake in Mahad in Raigarh District of Maharashtra and burned the 'Manusmriti'.

In order to open the gates of God to the men of God, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar tried to open the Kalaram Temple at

Nashik for the untouchables. He fought for the cause of untouchables.

In his opinion, the Hindu religion is harmed by the rigid caste system. He also thought that Hindu religion itself was responsible for that. So, he decided to adopt Buddhism and on 14th October, 1956 at Nagpur, he converted to Buddhism.

In Marathi Vishwakosh, a comment on Dr. Ambedkar appears,

"हिंदूधर्म जातीसंस्थेमुळे पोखरला गेला आहे, अशी त्यांची ठाम समजूत होती. स्पृश्यांकडून अस्पृश्यांवर होत असलेला अन्याय दूर होणार नाही या त्यांच्या दृढ श्रद्धेनुसार त्यांनी १४ आक्टोबर रोजी बौद्ध धर्माचा स्वीकार केला"<sup>8</sup>

### **Vitthal Ramji Shinde :**

In the beginning of the twentieth century, a prominent star in the form of Vitthal Ramji Shinde emerged on the horizon of social reformation. He established 'Depressed Classes Mission' society in 1906 in Mumbai for the cause of untouchables. He accelerated the work and started schools at various places in Mumbai for them and also started a leather factory to provide them economic assistance.

Up to 1909, twelve branches of the mission and sixteen schools were started for the untouchables. V. R. Shinde's motto was to create awareness and to build self-confidence among the depressed classes. He also tried to create equality in the minds

of the untouchables for themselves. In his task, V.R.Shinde could get sympathy and co-operation and also support of prominent personalities of the day viz., Maharaja Sayajirao Gaikwad, Tukojirao Holkar (statesmen), Sir John Clark, Sir Moore Mackenzie, Dr. Maan (British officers), Sir Narayan Chandawarkar, Prin. R.P. Paranjape, Maharshi Dhondo Keshav Karve, Lokmanya Tilak (educationists of India), Shivram Janba Kamble, Shri Dangale, Shri. Natha Maharaj (untouchable leaders).

Due to Vitthal Ramji Shinde's intensive work, the Indian National Congress passed a bill of eradication of untouchability, in the Calcutta conference held under the Presidentship of Mrs. Anne Bessant.

### **Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj :**

Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu, The Maharaj of Kolhapur State also worked with sincerity for untouchables. He also tried for their social, economical and cultural development. So he started schools and hostels for the untouchables. He established co-relation between education and religion sectors and directed that the schools were to be run on the income of the temples and other religious institutions. In this way he used the money of the common people for their own intellectual progress. In 1917, Shahu Maharaj declared free primary education for all in his Kolhapur State.

In spite of his earnest efforts, boys in small remote villages in his state were deprived of education. To overcome this difficulty, Shahu Maharaj started hostels in Kolhapur and provided them residential education.

Rajarshi Shahu protested against the casteism in the society. From 1894 onwards, he gave opportunities to the untouchables in different offices of his kingdom. It is notable that his elephantman was a 'Mahar'. At the time of his daughter's marriage, he appointed an untouchable as her coachman. His royal dresses were prepared by untouchable tailors. Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj extended economic support to a Mahar named Kamble, to start a tea stall in the market and he himself used to go to the stall and enjoyed tea. He declared streets, wells and other public places open to all. In 1919, he declared 'balutedari' system unlawful and issued an order to all schools prohibiting teachers to discriminate among the students on the basis of their castes.

Rajarshi Shahu's efforts against untouchability were accelerated by a religious ceremony, 'Vedokta issue' in the history of India, when his Purohit Narayan Bhataji refused to say the 'Vedokta Mantras' in a religious ceremony explaining that Rajarshi Shahu was not a Kshatriya. From this incident, Rajarshi Shahu realised the bad conditions of other castes and especially of shudras due to dominance of Brahmins. He

widened the scope of his work of the eradication of untouchability and upliftment of untouchables.

### **Mahatma Gandhi :**

Mahatma Gandhi was the champion of the cause of untouchables. He was the national leader of India before the Independence. When he entered the Indian politics, he declared 'No Swaraj along with Untouchability'.<sup>9</sup> He rightly said,

"We are guilty of having suppressed our brethren ; we make them crawl on their bellies ; with eyes red with rage, we push them out of railway compartments. What more than this has the British rule done ?"<sup>10</sup>

Gandhiji thought that we were more brutal to untouchables than the British rulers to Indians.

Alongwith untouchability, swarajya was meaningless to Gandhiji. In a conference on suppressed classes at Ahmedabad, Gandhi very earnestly asked the countrymen,

"We ought to purge ourselves of this pollution. It is idle to talk of swaraj so long as we do not protect the weak and the helpless or so long as it is possible for a single swarajist to injure the feelings of any individual. Swaraj means that not a single Hindu or Muslim shall for a moment

arrogantly think that we can crush with impurity meek Hindus or Muslims."<sup>11</sup>

Gandhiji's sympathy for the untouchables is beyond doubt and limit. He expressed the need of purification of untouchability. In his opinion, it was not untouchables who needed purification. In 'Young India' he wrote,

"I would warn the Hindu brethren against the tendency which one sees now-a-days of exploiting the suppressed classes for a political end. To remove untouchability is a penance that caste Hindus owe to Hinduism and to themselves. The purification required is not of untouchables but of the so-called superior castes."<sup>12</sup>

Gandhiji expressed his thoughts on the need of removal of untouchability before India attained Independence. Untouchability, he said, should not come in the way of our progress.

Gandhiji went on fasting to open the temples for untouchables. He started calling untouchables as 'Harijan' i.e. the men of God and considered untouchability as the greatest blot on humanity.

Mahatma Gandhi's efforts and thoughts on the removal of untouchability were more sound than his political thoughts.



## **[C] Literature on Depressed Classes**

The work of the social reformers especially towards untouchability was the main source of inspiration behind the creation of dalit literature either by the dalits themselves or by the non-dalits.

In Marathi, the untouchables are commonly called dalits and literature on them either by dalits themselves or by others is known as Dalit literature.

Dalit is a man who is culturally, socially, economically and religiously backward.

Mr. Namdeo Dhasal defines dalit thus,

"A dalit is he who belongs to scheduled castes and is a labourer, worker landless farm worker or an adivasi."<sup>13</sup>

Namdeo Dhasal's definition is comprehensive and all inclusive. In 1933, the government made a settlement of castes (famous as 'जातीय निवाडा' (Jateey Nivada) in the social history of India) and used the expression 'depressed classes'<sup>14</sup> for dalits.

A dalit is one who is deprived of his human rights and treated in most inhuman way. But to be an untouchable is more disastrous, more inhuman and more humiliating than being a dalit or depressed. A dalit leads his life in utter poverty and an untouchable is deprived of humanity. An untouchable is not allowed to walk in streets in the presence of the upper caste

Hindus. In public places, an untouchable is not supposed to be present. His foot prints also polluted the sawarnas. So untouchables hung a broom around their waste to wipe out their foot prints. The shadow of the untouchables was also supposed as unholy by the sawarnas and hence they were not allowed to enter villages and towns especially during morning and evening hours. They were kept away from temples and ultimately from Gods.

In dalit literature, an exposure is given to the miserable life of dalits. Dalit literature came into being in Marathi in the second half of the twentieth century after the Independence. Dalit literature is a distinct class in itself. It is realistic in nature. The first Dalit literary Conference (दलित साहित्य संमेलन) was held in 1958 in Mumbai. In the conference, it was resolved that there should be created a separate division of dalit literature created by dalit and non-dalit writers in Marathi.

Some scholars hold that the dalit literature is exclusively written by dalit writers only. In this connection, Dr G. M. Pawar says,

" In my opinion, there is less communication within classes. Every class closed in itself. The experiences of dalits cannot be had by others. So there is realistic exposure to their sufferings in the literature by themselves. I can not call the

literature written by others on dalits' life as  
Dalit literature "15

Dr. Sushila Dhage holds the similar attitude to dalit literature. She writes,

" दलिताला 'माणूस' म्हणून येथील समाज व्यवस्थेने कधीच  
स्वीकारले नाही. त्याप्रमाणे मराठी कादंबरीनेही त्याला कधी स्थान  
दिले नाही. "16

But this is not a complete truth. That the social system of India not accepted the dalit as a human being is true up to a greater extent. But Marathi literature gave significant place to dalit life. A number of Marathi writers wrote on dalit life in their stories, and novels.

There were non-dalit writers in Pre and Post-Independence periods in India. They played a prominent role in developing social awareness regarding evils of untouchability and created sympathy for the dalits in the minds of the members of the society. Dalit life is portrayed sympathetically in many novels.

'Shyamsunder' is the first Marathi novel by Shreepad Krishna Kolhatkar, non-dalit writer on dalit life published in 1925. This novel presents the life of 'Mahar' and 'Matang' communities, both were then untouchables.

The novel *Untouchable* by Mulk Raj Anand is the first and pioneering masterpiece in Indian English novel on the sufferings of an untouchable from the latrine sweepers' community. This is

a classic novel and has created far reaching influence on future Dalit literature in India.

'इंदू काळे आणि सरला भोळे' (Indu Kale ani Sarale Bhole) by V. M. Joshi (1934), 'आईची कृपा' (Aichi Chrupa) by D. N. Shikhare(1934), 'खरा उध्दव' (Khara Uddhav) by Ram Tanay (1936), 'दोन मने' (Don Mane) by V. S. Khandekar (1938), 'मी राम जोशी' ( Mi Ram Joshi) by B.V. Varerkar (1941), 'प्रतिज्ञा' (Pratidnya) by N. S. Phadake (1941), 'धुके आणि दहिवर' (Dhuke ani Dahiwar) by Gita Sane, 'प्राजक्ताची फुले' (Parijatakachi Phule) by V. V. Hadap (1942), 'महापूर' (Mahapur) by V. D. Chindarkar (1942), 'चंदनवाडी, एक गांव' (Chandanwadi, Ek Gav) by G. T. Madkholkar (1943), 'रामाचा शेला' (Ramacha Shela) by Sane Guruji (1944), 'माझा धर्म' (Maza Dharma) by N. S. Phadake (1946) all these novels present the life of Mahar caste people i.e. untouchables.

The novel 'गांवगुंड' (Gav Gund) by G. L. Thokal (1946) presents the life of Matang caste. The novel 'किर्ती' (Kirti) written by Shantabai Nashikkar and published in 1942 presents specially the life of Chambhar (the leather worker) community. 'सुशिलेचा देव' (Sushilecha Dev) (1930) by V. M. Joshi and 'पानकळा' (Pankala) (1939) by R. V. Dighe present the life of 'Wadar' and 'Bhilla' communities respectively.

'सरई' (Sarai) by R. V. Dighe, 'गोदारणी' (Godarani) by V. V. Hadap, 'बंधनाच्या पलीकडे' (Bandhanachya Palikade) by P. Y. Deshpande, 'ब्राम्हणकन्या' (Brahman Kannya) by S. V. Ketkar and 'दुलारी' (Dulari) by V. V. Hadap are some other novels written on the life of socially and culturally oppressed and excommunicated in the Pre-Independence period.

After Indian Independence also the tradition of the non dalits writing on the life of oppressed and depressed classes in the society continued. After 1947, a gallery of writers made dalit life as the main theme of their writing. Among such writers, Shreepad Krishna Kolhatkar, V. M. Joshi, V. S. Khandekar, Sane Guruji, G. T. Modkholkar, S. M. Mate, Arun Sadhu, Chandrakant Nalage are worth mention.

Vibhawari Shirurkar and Venkatesh Madgulkar, Chandrakumar Nalage painted to the greatest extent, the miserable life of dalits in their short stories.

Vibhawari Shirurkar's novel 'बळी' (Bali) portrays the life of Mang-Garudi community an untouchable caste and Venkatesh Madgulkar's novel 'बनगरवाडी' (Bangarwadi) depicts the life of Dhangar community.

Some other non-dalit writers also tried to portray the life of untouchables in their short stories. V. B. Karnik, B. B. Borkar, Durga Bhagwat, Ranjit Desai, G. D. Madgulkar, Arvind Gokhale, P. B. Bhawe, Indira Sant, S. N. Pendase also painted

the dalit life in their short story literature. However their efforts are marginal.

This shows us that dalit life is given a significant place in Marathi literature especially in Marathi novel. Further, non-dalits have written on the dalit life with free hand and with open heart. The writer's caste is meaningless.

The miserable life of untouchables is articulated by untouchables in their self-revelation in various literary forms. For example, Saint Chokha Mela's 'Abhangas', Laxman Mane's famous novel 'Upara', Shankar Kharat's 'Taral-Antaral' etc. These dalit writers asserted their dislike for rigid Hindu caste system and their sufferings caused by it expressing their meaningless life. Dalit writers' expression of their sufferings is often autobiographical mostly sincere but sometimes monotonous and aggressive, to that extent to consider it a sensational and begging sympathy. On the contrary, some intellectual sawarnas from the early past have been expressing their dislike for the caste system and compassion for untouchables' wretched life. For example, Saint Tukaram states that caste discrimination is vicious (भेदाभेद धर्म अमंगळ). Similarly, Sant Eknath gave equal status to untouchables even at the fear of his ex-communication by the religious authorities. Eknath did not observe untouchability as it is inhuman and there was an instance that he picked up an untouchable child from hot sand in

summer. The tradition of such compassion for the untouchables continued in future.

Occasionally, however the general trend of untouchability continued through centuries in the colonial India also. That is why, Mulk Raj Anand wrote his novel *Untouchable* in the foot steps of Sant Tukaram and Eknath. The same trend to harass untouchables seemed to have continued in the Post-Independence period in India and the dalits were treated with cruelty even after having legal rights of 'equality', 'liberty' and 'fraternity' with the sawarnas. Its product is Arun Sadhu's novel called *Bahishkrut* belonging to the eight decade of the twentieth century.

The dalit literature written by non-dalits is the intellectuals' awareness against the caste-system and is the need of the time.

The present study, therefore, selects and concentrates on two non-dalit writers' novels on dalits' life for the present study, who belong to two different political and social phases viz. the Pre-Independence and the Post-Independence periods. Mulk Raj Anand inspired by Gandhian thoughts on liberation and upliftment of untouchables wrote his famous novel *Untouchable* on the life of a 'Bhangi'. Being Kshatriya, Mulk Raj Anand does not show Kshatriya's short-sighted attitude to the untouchables, but expresses the need of eradication of untouchability from India.

Similarly, Arun Sadhu is shocked and surprised by the existence of untouchability in the Post-Colonial India even after untouchability is legally prohibited. He expresses through his *Bahishkrut*, once again the need of eradication of untouchability from the country.

The present study, therefore, makes a comparative study of Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and Arun Sadhu's *Bahishkrut*, the novels written on the theme of untouchability during two socially, culturally and politically different periods in India.

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